



Panel discusses jobless benefits

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South Carolina legislators are discussing changes to a state jobless benefit system that's now borrowed \$634 million to keep weekly checks paid.

Members of the ad hoc House panel said Wednesday they want to ensure that people who fail drug tests can't get benefits. The Employment Security Commission says claims involving drug abuse are less than 1 percent of claims.

They're also trying to find ways to limit the ability of companies to routinely lay off workers for things like plant maintenance without having to pay higher premiums.

The state has to begin paying back its borrowing in a couple of years or employers will begin losing tax breaks on the unemployment insurance premiums they pay, and that would cost more than \$151 million during the next five years.